



Questions and Answers about the Physical Fitness Test

Why does California have a Physical Fitness Test?

The California Physical Fitness Test (PFT) provides information that can be used by students to plan personal fitness programs; teachers to design the curriculum for physical education programs; and parents/guardians to understand their children's fitness levels. This program also provides results that are used to monitor changes in the physical fitness of California students. By law (*Education Code* Section 60800), all school districts in California are required to administer the PFT annually to all students in grades five, seven, and nine.

What is the PFT?

The State Board of Education designated the FITNESSGRAM® as the PFT for students in California public schools. The FITNESSGRAM® is a comprehensive health-related physical fitness battery developed by The Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research. The primary goal of the FITNESSGRAM® is to assist students in establishing life-time habits of regular physical activity.

What are the fitness areas tested? What test options are available for each fitness area?

The FITNESSGRAM® is comprised of the following six fitness areas, with a number of test options provided for most areas:

Aerobic Capacity

- PACER (Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run)
- One-Mile Run
- Walk Test (only for ages thirteen and older)

Body Composition

- Skinfold Measurements
- Body Mass Index

Abdominal Strength and Endurance

- Curl-Up

Trunk Extensor Strength and Flexibility

- Trunk Lift

Upper Body Strength and Endurance

- Push-Up
- Modified Pull-Up
- Pull-Up

- Flexed-Arm Hang

Flexibility

- Back-Saver Sit and Reach
- Shoulder Stretch

Descriptions of the six fitness areas and test options can be found in the "2004 Physical Fitness Test Reference Guide" on pp. 6-13.

Who takes the PFT?

All California public school students in grades five, seven, and nine are required to take the PFT, whether or not they are enrolled in a physical education class. Students who are physically unable to take the entire test battery are to be given as much of the test as conditions permit.

When is the PFT given?

The designated testing window for the administration of the PFT is February, March, April, or May.

How can schools best prepare students for the PFT?

Students should be instructed regularly in basic concepts of fitness development and maintenance. Physical fitness instruction should include explanations of each fitness area and its relationship to good health as well as activities to develop conditioning. Further, students should be provided opportunities to participate in vigorous physical activity and exercise throughout the school day or in physical education classes. Because conditioning prior to testing is important to the safe administration of the PFT, a minimum of two weeks should be allowed for students to learn about how each fitness-area test is administered and to engage in practice sessions.

Can students complete more than one test option for each fitness area?

A number of options for each fitness area are provided so that all students, including those with disabilities, have the maximum opportunity to participate in the tests. The teacher or the student may select the test for each fitness area; however, only one test for each fitness area should be reported. It is not necessary for all students within a school or all schools within a school district to use the same test options.

**Are make-ups allowed for students who are absent on a particular day of testing?**

Yes. Schools should provide make-up opportunities for students who are absent on testing days; however, all make-ups need to take place within the testing window.

Can students be excused from the PFT?

No. The general opt-out provision of *Education Code* Section 60615 does not apply to the PFT program. Excuses from taking the PFT are limited to physically disabled students.

What is done to assist students with disabilities on the PFT?

Certain accommodations or modifications may be provided for students with disabilities who need special assistance on the PFT. The Special Education Accommodations/Modifications for California Statewide Assessments chart provides a list of the types of accommodations that are available for the PFT. This chart is posted on the Internet at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/>. FITNESSGRAM® also includes alternative activities, or modifications, designed to enable students with disabilities to participate in the PFT. Healthy Fitness Zones have not been established for the alternative activities; therefore, these activities should only be used to establish baseline performance and set subsequent goals for individual students. Accommodations or modifications should be specified in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan.

What is the process for making the decisions about accommodations for students with disabilities?

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 team is responsible for deciding how students with disabilities will participate in the PFT.

Where can the test administration materials be ordered?

FITNESSGRAM® materials are not available from the California Department of Education (CDE). The materials needed for the FITNESSGRAM® administration may be ordered from Human Kinetics at (800) 747-4457. Human Kinetics offers most of the resources needed for the test administration including the FITNESSGRAM® Test Administration Manual and other materials, such as skinfold calipers and curl-up strips.

What training should school districts provide for staff to administer the test?

To ensure the integrity of the PFT data, school districts and schools should ensure that any staff involved with the administration of the PFT is thoroughly familiarized with the test materials and administration procedures. To support such efforts, school districts and schools should use the FITNESSGRAM® Test Administration Manual and involve staff who have prior experience with the test administration. The FITNESSGRAM® Test Administration Manual includes a DVD with a video of all the test procedures.

Can the test be given outside of the administration window?

School districts are required to administer the PFT to all students in grades five, seven, and nine during the months of February, March, April, or May. The test may not be administered outside of this administration window.

What is the annual apportionment for the PFT?

No apportionment is provided for the PFT. Costs incurred to administer, score, analyze, and report results of the PFT are recoverable as "state-mandated costs." State-mandated costs claiming instructions and forms for the PFT can be accessed at <http://www.sco.ca.gov/ard/local/locreim/index.shtml>.

Where should the school districts send the data from the test administration?

A school district that processes its own PFT data should submit the data directly to Educational Data Systems, the state contractor responsible for collecting the PFT results and preparing the PFT reports for California. If a school district contracts with a vendor to process the PFT results, the vendor may submit the data from the PFT administration directly to Educational Data Systems on behalf of the school district.

What are the options available for submitting the data?

There are three options available for submitting the data to Educational Data Systems:

- Using an Internet data entry site
- E-mailing with attached file
- Mailing a disk or CD-ROM

Contact Educational Data Systems at (800) 532-4424 for additional information about these options.

**What is the time line for submitting the data?**

Data from the PFT administration must be submitted to the state contractor, Educational Data Systems, by June 30.

What are the standards for each fitness area?

The FITNESSGRAM® uses criterion-referenced standards to evaluate performance for each fitness area (e.g., body composition, abdominal strength and endurance). The Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research established the standards using current research, expert opinions, and known relationships. These standards represent a level of fitness that offers some protection against the diseases associated with sedentary living. The standards for boys and girls are different for tests where there is a valid rationale from a health-related perspective. For example, differences in cardiac function and body composition between adolescent boys and girls result in boys having a higher aerobic capacity than girls.

How are the PFT results reported?

Performance on each of the fitness-area tests is classified into two general areas:

- Healthy Fitness Zone
- Needs Improvement (i.e., not in the Healthy Fitness Zone)

The desired standard for each test option is the Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ). The range of measurements that fall into the HFZ for each test option of the FITNESSGRAM® can be found in the “2004 Physical Fitness Test Reference Guide” on page 6 or the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/pf/>. All students should strive to achieve a score within the HFZ for each fitness-area test. It is possible that some students score above the HFZ. These scores are reported as in the HFZ.

When can parents/guardians expect to receive their child’s score report?

Students will be provided with their individual results upon completing the PFT (*Education Code* Section 60800). Some school districts may require that a PFT score report be sent to parents/guardians. Parents/guardians should be advised to check with their local school district to determine if and when PFT score reports will be sent home.

When are the results of the PFT available on the CDE Web site?

The results of the PFT are available on the CDE Web site <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/> by December 1.

Are the PFT results included on the School Accountability Report Card (SARC)?

Schools are required by law to include the PFT results in the SARC (*Education Code* Section 60800). Further, the most recent physical fitness data is to be reported, including the percent of students scoring in the HFZ for all of the six fitness areas tested. The SARC template, which can be accessed from the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/sa/>, contains a sample table for the physical fitness data.

How can the test results be used?

The PFT results can be used in several ways. Schools can use the results to determine the fitness levels of their students and to provide direction for curricular plans. Students can be encouraged to use the results to develop a fitness program of maintenance or improvement. Parents/guardians can use the results to help their children plan fitness activities matched to their individual needs. Since the PFT is given on a yearly basis to students, schools and school districts also can use the results to monitor changes in the fitness status of groups of students over time.

Do PFT results appear on student transcripts?

There is no requirement to include PFT results on student transcripts. Schools may keep the PFT results in cumulative files.

Is there an awards program for the PFT?

No. California does not offer an awards program for the PFT. School districts, schools, parents/guardians, and community members are encouraged to recognize students, including those with disabilities, for improvements in exercise behaviors or on achieving the HFZ in different PFT fitness areas. Care should be taken, however, to protect students’ individual results.